

Notes on Ephesians 3 : 14 – 17a, 1 Thessalonians 3 : 6 – 13  
‘In Jesus, today is the day we’ve waited for.’

In a small Yorkie bar how many chunks of chocolate are there? The answer is 5 and in today’s passage Paul returns to his commitment to pray for this church. In chapter 1 verses 15 – 23 Paul has prayed for their flourishing in Jesus and he does so again here in chapter 3. Paul reminds them that he is committed to praying for them as a church and as your Pastor this is key to what I do too. The small Yorkie bars I gave out in church this morning model how we are to think about prayer, as well as encouraging each of us to be a people who pray. Prayer is never easy and perhaps it is as demanding as being asked to share your chocolate.

Each of the chunks in the Yorkie bar help us to remember what Paul is saying to us this morning. The first chunk reminds us of own story of meeting and knowing Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, as our friend and brother, as our rock and fortress, as our everything. The sheer pleasure of eating this first chunk reminds us of Psalm 34 verse 8, where we are encouraged to taste and see how good God is. When we eat this chunk, we think of the numerous blessings we have in Jesus in chapter 1 verses 3 – 14. Paul in his prayer, in verses 15 – 23, prays for them, and for us, to be overwhelmed by the love, mercy and grace of God we know in Jesus.

With chunk 2, the challenge is to share it with someone. When you share this chunk, we do so to encourage that person to know God by using the amazing picture of God as Father. We remind ourselves that this image is rooted in the Old Testament and in the New we see its branch in Jesus and his own unique and relationship he had with his Father God. What is amazing about this chunk is that it reminds us that in Jesus we can enter into the same relationship he has with this Father God too.

When we share our third chunk, we are reminded that we can know God wherever we know family. This means that we can know God in the context of our heavenly family, or in other words, the church and we can know him in our earthly family, the one we were born into too. But this image also reminds us that we need to be realistic about this too because in every family, of whatever sort, we will know joys, laughter, peace, contentment, love, giving, kindness, goodness and griefs. Perhaps this is why the idea of family and prayer are linked together. When we are part of any family, one of the most important things that we can do is to pray for this family because no family is perfect!!

When we share our fourth chunk, we hear Paul's prayer for each of us to be reinforced by the work of the Spirit in our lives. We need reinforcing so that Jesus may dwell completely in you, and because we are family, so we need constant upkeep if Jesus is to dwell in and among us too. It's not that Jesus requires perfection among us, but he does require us to have a broken and contrite heart, a repentant heart and a awe filled heart. Neither is this to be a superficial makeover either, because Jesus yearns so much to dwell in and among us, so he will continue to do a thorough makeover in us and among us.

When we share our fifth chunk, please look at each other and be amazed that Jesus wants to dwell in you. We remind ourselves that he has always wanted to dwell in you because this has always been his intention. This goes back to the very beginning in Genesis 1 where it speaks of God delighting and dwelling in creation. Later, we read of the building of a Tabernacle and a Temple as places to remind Israel that God wants to dwell among them as their God. The Good News of the Gospel is that he wants to dwell in you and Paul reminds us that when God fulfils all his promises he will be fully dwelling here in and among us in the midst of his new creation.

From 2002-2011 Yorkie bars had the gag tag of 'Not for girls' which was never true because they wanted everyone to eat their chocolate. Our other passage is 1 Thessalonians 3 verses 6 – 13 Paul writes, as he does here, to say how encouraged he is to know that Jesus dwells in them and the question these two passages ask us is, 'Does Jesus see it here?' The answer to that is yes, for Jesus dwells in and among us. He does so that he might bless us in our lives and enable us to live Jesus focussed, Holy Spirit powered lives. This is our privilege, it is our joy and it is our glory and, above all, it is Jesus' desire too. May we all live like this.